



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMAND

7 November 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

FROM: 502d MSG HC (Garrison Chaplain)
2590 Funston Road Suite 35
Fort Sam Houston, Texas 78234-5035

SUBJECT: Religious Support for Caisson Funerals at Ft Sam Houston Cemetery

1. Ft Sam Houston (FSH) is one of only three places in the Army (and in all services) to have full honors funerals with a caisson. Funerals provide tremendous opportunity to touch the lives of many families for God and Country.
2. The following points are offered as suggestions when participating in a funeral with a caisson.
 - a. Full honors implies full dress-blue uniform. The honors team will be dressed in blues with medals. Chaplains can wear ribbons (most preferred) or medals.
 - b. Chaplains should meet up with the caisson group before the actual funeral to ensure that they are covering the same person. Many funerals take place each day at the FSH cemetery (and you don't want to lead a procession for the wrong person).
 - c. Chaplains should render honors when the remains are off loaded from the hearse onto the caisson. Take the lead of the detail NCOIC, if there is any question.
 - d. Chaplains generally lead the procession 25 to 30 feet ahead of the caisson.
 - e. Upon arrival at the funeral covering (usually done at covering #4 at FSH), take position near the entrance of the covering and render honors (salute) as the body is placed on the conveyance.
 - f. FSH cemetery often conducts military honors (playing of taps, firing squad and folding of the US Flag) prior to the Chaplain's comments. This is for the convenience of the honor guard and is subject to change, especially for Caisson Funerals. If you are the presiding chaplain coordinate with Casualty and the Honor Guard for the sequence you prefer.
3. Funeral procedures when the deceased's remains are cremated and contained in an urn:
 - a. 2.a-f above, still apply with the following changes:

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(1) The honors detail will up load an empty casket on the caisson. The casket has a trap door in the end of the casket where the urn is placed, prior to movement to the funeral covering. The casket will then be draped with a US flag.

(2) The honors detail will off-load the urn at the funeral covering and place it on a stand, instead of on a conveyance. There will only be two Soldiers involved, one to carry the urn and place it on the stand, the other will present a prefolded US Flag to the deceased's family.

b. Be sensitive to the needs of the family and seek to minister to their needs, as opposed to rigidly following protocol.

4. Further questions can be addressed to 502d MSG Chaplain Office at 221-5007 or 221-2755.

Chaplain (COL) USA
502d MSG Chaplain
(Fort Sam Houston Garrison Chaplain)

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